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FROM THE COEUR D'ALENE PRESS

Student body growth qualifies PF for funds

Posted: Thursday, Sep 04, 2008 - 11:11:24 pm PDT

KOOTENAI COUNTY -- Post Falls' school population has grown by 109 students from last year at this time, prompting the school board on Thursday to certify to the county that it will receive \$540,000 in emergency levy funds.

The increase brings the district's total population to about 5,600, 2 percent more than last year.

"We have personnel issues that need to be rectified (due to the increase)," Post Falls Superintendent Jerry Keane said. "We have some needs; there's no doubt about it."

Post Falls hired two teachers last week -- one each at the Frederick Post Kindercenter and Mullan Trail Elementary -- and more help is also needed in other schools, Keane said.

Keane said Post Falls' budget was built based on a predicted 1.6 percent growth.

"Two percent is not too bad," Keane said, adding that it is slightly more than the district anticipated. "If you get too much more than that, you'll struggle to keep up."

Coeur d'Alene's population of about 10,200 is "flat" compared to last year, meaning the district will not receive emergency funds, said Glenda Pope, secretary to the superintendent.

Coeur d'Alene on Thursday night canceled its tentative school board meeting for today to discuss emergency funds.

Lakeland, down 27 students (.6 percent) compared to last year at this time, will also not be eligible for emergency funding, barring an unexpected increase of that number today, said Tom Taggart, business manager.

Lakeland's population is 4,410.

Lakeland has scheduled a school board meeting for today in case the district surprisingly qualifies for emergency funds, but Taggart said the meeting will likely be canceled.

"We want to make sure we get everybody into the count (today), but it doesn't look like we'll qualify," Taggart said.

Students must have an increase in population the first week of school compared to the year before at that time to qualify for emergency funding. Districts that qualify can receive about \$5,000 per student of the increased amount. The money can be spent on needs such as teachers, books, furniture and rising energy costs.

State law allows growing school districts to apply for emergency levy funds to defray costs because growth is difficult to predict when budgets are approved earlier in the year.

The funding comes from local property taxes. However, taxes will not be increased as a result of the district's action due to new construction dollars spread throughout the district. Keane said citizens will actually pay less taxes to the school district this year.

Keane said with the funds, Post Falls plans to hire four elementary teachers and increase hours for a gifted and talented facilitator and a high school PE teachers. That will consume roughly \$300,000 of the funds. They will also be used for rising energy costs and other needs.

Spurring Post Falls' increase is a record 455 students at Frederick Post, surpassing the previous record of 425 set last year.

West Ridge Elementary opened this year and elementary school boundaries were altered to reduce crowding at Seltice and Prairie View.

Post Falls High's population, featuring a large freshman class, is about 1,580.

Keane said that while a facility planning committee will resume talks this fall about a performing arts theatre and physical education building, it doesn't appear that a second high school will be needed for several years.

At Lakeland, the only school with a significant change in population is Betty Keifer Elementary. That school increased from 457 to 495, an 8 percent jump.

"We guessed that it would grow, but not that much," Taggart said. "That area has the most subdivisions that are growing and affordable for families."

FROM THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Idaho schools generally improved on test scores

September 5, 2008

To see how school districts fared, visit: www.boardofed.idaho.gov/saa/ayp.asp.

At Twin Lakes Elementary on Thursday, second-graders practiced writing the sentences that their teacher read aloud.

"The list is on my desk. The list is on my desk," teacher Jeri McDevitt read slowly and clearly, strolling around the room and looking at her students' papers as they painstakingly wrote the words. "I am seeing that a lot of you are really good at spelling. That's really exciting."

A renewed focus on reading and writing has led to something perhaps more exciting for the entire Lakeland School District, based in Rathdrum. Last school year, all 11 of the district's schools met the "adequate yearly progress" goals mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. That's an improvement from the 2006-07 school year, when, like many districts in Idaho, Lakeland saw student language scores decline on the new version of the Idaho Standards Achievement Test, resulting in the district and many others not hitting their goals.

In the 2007-08 school year, four North Idaho districts, including Lakeland, met the state standards. While that means nine others fell short, educators are applauding the gains schools statewide made in 2007-08 after a dismal performance the prior year. Many educators attributed the poor performance in 2006-07 to tougher standards and a new ISAT test.

In 2007-08, 12 out of 16 schools in the Coeur d'Alene School District hit their goals, after 10 fell short the previous school year. In Post Falls, five of the district's seven schools achieved the goals, after all seven fell short the year before. A single school not making adequate progress means the entire district does not achieve that mark.

And though the state's schools did better overall last year, more than half the districts still are not making the progress dictated by the federal government. In 2007-08, 43 percent of the state's districts hit their goals, up from 27 percent the year before.

"We are hearing of more districts teaching to the content standards rather than teaching to the test," said Mark Browning, spokesman for the state Board of Education, who predicted additional improvement next year. "Each district has a goal to improve their scores and to improve the proficiency of students."

In Post Falls, Superintendent Jerry Keane said language usage skills improved greatly among the district's schools, but students need to improve middle school math skills. Keane said he was proudest of improvements made among the district's African-American, Hispanic and Native American students. "That's what No Child Left Behind is all about," he said. "It helps close those performance gaps."

Other educators, however, criticized the federal law for being unnecessarily punitive when it labels an entire school or district a failure as a result of challenges with subgroups of students.

Students at Washington Elementary School in the Lake Pend Oreille School District had solid reading and math scores, but because the district tested one too few special education students, that school failed to meet goals, said Superintendent Dick Cvitanich. "The rules are pretty arcane," he said. "We think in our mind, Washington made it, but according to the criteria, they did not. Sandpoint Middle School did not make AYP, and yet in the area of reading they exceeded the statewide average. That doesn't seem quite fair."

Coeur d'Alene Superintendent Hazel Bauman agreed that the federal law is too punitive, but said the intention is "right on. We have to close the achievement gap." She applauded the hard work that helped improve the district's performance, but she remained focused on helping two subgroups of students struggling the most — low-income children and students with disabilities.

Three of four district schools failed to meet goals because they did not meet those students' needs, she said.

Bauman said she knows the students that continue to struggle can be helped because other district schools with similar challenges — including Borah, Fernan and Bryan elementary schools — have been successful. Low-income students rely almost entirely on their schools to teach them what they need to know to be successful, she said, while wealthier families can afford to offer children more resources and educational experiences outside of school.

“We know what to do,” Bauman said. “We have to be absolutely vigilant that we don’t have any holes in our curriculum for those kids. Once we do that, that gap just closes.”

FROM THE MOSCOW PULLMAN DAILY NEWS (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

HER VIEW: Cheating hurts core of our social system (commentary)

Posted on: Thursday, September 04, 2008

Newspaper stories, advice columns and other media have been full of stories about school cheating and efforts, or lack of efforts, on the part of schools and teachers to deal with it effectively.

The recent banning of cell phones by the Coeur d'Alene School District to prevent their use in cheating illustrates one example. Too many instances are reported on the total lack of any action on the part of teachers, school officials or parents to stop cheating.

Whether or not we have children or grandchildren of school age ourselves, this is an issue that should concern everyone. Cheating hurts everyone. Cheating hurts the very core of our social system. We need to insist that it be dealt with as the social problem it is.

Who wants a doctor, dentist, civil engineer inspecting our bridges, a teacher for our children, for instance, who cheated their way to passing grades? What information did they fail to learn? Which lecture did they sleep through? Schools and every student they graduate suffer if it is known that school tolerates cheaters, thereby devaluing the grade structure and the integrity of their diplomas.

What I find particularly distressing is too often the cheaters don't understand the seriousness of their actions and, in some cases, are offended when anyone suggests they are doing something wrong. Even worse, some are even encouraged or abetted by pressure from their parents, who are equally offended if the school or teacher suggests their little darling did wrong.

Almost equally upsetting is the failure of some in positions of authority who either ignore the offenses or let the cheater get by with only a slap on the wrist. School officials from the school board on down need to adapt and publicize a strict code of conduct and be very clear about the consequences of violating that code. More important, they need to follow through with that

punishment. Proven instances of cheating should be part of the student's permanent record. Students need to be taught at an early age the meaning of plagiarism, how not to use the Internet for schoolwork, citation methods, etc.

I asked my daughter, who teaches at Western Oregon University, what their policy is. She said the usual punishment is flunking the test or assignment for the first offense, and repeated abuse results in expulsion. She also said the difficulty is proving the offense, and even proven offenses often are not reported to higher authorities so repeated offenses go unpunished. She said students are often pressured by parents to take more credits than they can handle, either in terms of time management skills or difficulty, and they get desperate.

When my husband and I were first married, we bought a set of Encyclopedia Britannica that came in handy when my husband was teaching high school. He was grading papers when he stopped to look up a subject and found one student had copied the article word for word. "I thought the writing was too good for him to have done." Not all proof is that easy, especially with the advent of the Internet. What teacher has time to scan all the Internet sources for pre-written papers or cheat sheets? Catching the homegrown variety of papers for hire is probably harder.

Allowing cheaters to get away with cheating undermines the integrity of our whole society. How many of the Wall Street moguls in jail now for violating SEC rules were cheaters in school? It would make a good study to find out. I also wonder about those who cheat on their spouses. Lessons we learn in school shouldn't be limited to book learning alone. Schools, from the beginning of our country, have been charged with teaching moral values such as honesty, ethics, integrity and the value of one's good name.

The Coeur d'Alene School District is to be commended for its action on banning this one means of cheating. Parents need to put up with any inconvenience caused by this ruling and be supportive of the board's efforts to stop cheating. I realize this is only one step, but it can be an important one. Other schools and colleges should look to their example.

Lenna Harding grew up in Pullman and lived her first 20 and past 30 years here. She is a longtime member of the League of Women Voters and serves on the board of the Gladish Community and Cultural Center.

FROM THE LEWISTON TRIBUNE (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Hearing set in dispute between Potlatch teachers, district

By Kerri Sandaine

Friday, September 5, 2008

A fact-finding hearing has been scheduled in a dispute over salaries and benefits between the teachers' association and the Potlatch School District.

Superintendent Joe Kren said the hearing, which is open to the public, is set to take place at 1 p.m. Tuesday at Potlatch City Hall. A Colorado fact finder, John Sass, will review information provided by the district and Potlatch Education Association, before making a ruling and possibly submitting a report with non-binding recommendations.

Earlier this year, the school district and teachers' association reached an impasse during negotiations over a new contract for the 2008-'09 school year. Although the wage dispute is still ongoing, school is in session.

"We actually got off to a great start," Kren said Thursday. "The attitudes of the teachers have been positive. That's never been an issue. They are hard-working professionals and that will continue."

Members of each party's negotiating team will attend the hearing, Kren said.

In other school business, a small-claims case filed against the school district in Latah County District Court was denied Thursday morning. The claim filed by a teacher, Michael E. Moats, concerned a dispute over how much he was paid, Kren said.

In another court case, a lawsuit brought against the district by the Potlatch Education Association over a personal-versus-professional leave issue was dismissed in July by Judge John R. Stegner and an appeal was filed Aug. 29, Kren said.

"The district thinks it was a personal day, and the state union thinks it should be a professional day," said Doug Richards, a Potlatch teacher involved in the case.

John E. Rumel, the lawyer for the Idaho Education Association, is representing the Potlatch Education Association in that matter.

FROM THE IDAHO-PRESS TRIBUNE, NAMPA

Caldwell teacher loves education

EDUCATION: Lincoln Elementary veteran recognized for excellence as district's Teacher of the Year

CALDWELL — Dawn Haney has been honored as the Caldwell School District's Teacher of the Year.

She has worked at Lincoln Elementary for 17 years — and it was her first teaching job.

H a n e y taught kind e r g a r t e n for 14 years and now she's in her fourth year of teaching first grade.

L a s t s p r i n g , Haney received the Teacher of the Year award at Lincoln. One teacher at each of Caldwell's 10 schools receive the building-level award annually. Then, in the fall, one

teacher, from those 10, is chosen as the districtwide Teacher of the Year. This is the first year she received either award. Haney discussed her experiences and shared why she is passionate about teaching.

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Q: Why did you become a teacher?

A: My mother was a teacher and I used to go in when I was in high school and help her in the classroom. I enjoyed that very much. And I had a lot of great role models who were teachers. I think I wanted to help children who weren't getting the help they needed.

Q: What do you love about teaching?

A: Of course, the first thing is working with the children and seeing their growth throughout the year. Also, helping parents have a better understanding of what they can do to help their children ... and being a positive role model for the kids — them having someone they can count on every day.

Q: How has education changed in the past 17 years?

A: I think that our standards and expectations are higher because of our state and federal testing. The family unit is a little disrupted. We're seeing a lot more grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. I admire them greatly that they're there to support their grandkids.

Q: What can you tell us about Lincoln Elementary School?

A: I've always been very fond of Lincoln. It's a very family-oriented school and that's why I think I like it. I see many generations coming back to Lincoln.

Q: What makes a good teacher?

A: Ever since I took my first education class ... something I've kept with me that the professor said was, "Always treat children as if their parents were standing next to you." The most important characteristics of a good teacher are: a sense of humor, flexibility and being organized.

Q: Why do you think you received this award?

A: I think it was because of my boundless energy. I have a very engaging teaching style. My students are very active and engaged in their learning.

Teachers and students talk about Haney:

“I had the best firstgrade teacher. Mrs. Haney was nice and helpful. She always said nice stuff to us. If we made a mistake, she would say, ‘Keep on trying; you’ll get it soon.’ She was never absent. She taught us the vowel song. It was very funny so we laughed a lot when we sang it. We did lots of fun art projects, too. She was a great teacher.”

Former student

Cassandra Madrigal

“I liked Mrs. Haney as a teacher. She was always nice. She was never rude to us, even if we did something bad. She never sent me to the bad table. We learned a lot, especially about dinosaurs. I really liked dinosaurs, and I liked how she drew them so well. She was the best kindergarten teacher.

Former student

Hunter Overman

“Dawn Haney is a naturalborn teacher. We can all go to college and receive a degree, but few of us are so blessed to have the talent to teach that Dawn has. She loves her job and her students. It shows in the ways she interacts with first-graders and in the warm, exciting learning environment she creates.”

Donette Hammond

Title 1 teacher

“Dawn Haney seems to possess remarkable patience with children. I’ve often wondered if Dawn maintains the same calm demeanor when trying to chip out of a sand trap as she does when dealing with a recalcitrant student. Maybe her students would behave better if they knew she owned a full set of golf clubs, and knows how to use ‘em!”

Ken Reed, physical education teacher

FROM THE IDAHO STATESMAN

U of I law dean will speak to City Club

- STATESMAN STAFF

Edition Date: 09/05/08

"Law, Education, and the Public Interest: What's Best for Idaho?" is the topic of a forum from 11:45 a.m.to 1:15 p.m. Sept. 12 at The Grove Hotel, Boise.

Don Burnett, dean of the University of Idaho Law School, is the guest speaker at the City Club of Boise event.

The University of Idaho has been home to the state's only law school for nearly 100 years. On Aug. 21, the State Board of Education scaled back a plan to open a branch of the law school in

Boise. Instead, only third-year students will be able to attend classes in Boise, beginning in 2010. The board invited submission of a revised plan for a full branch.

Deadline for registration is noon Wednesday. Register by calling City Club at 371-2221, sending e-mail to jcarrell@clearwire.net or going online at www.cityclubofboise.org. Cost is \$16 for members, \$21 for non-members, \$5 for listeners (no meal) and \$10 for Students with valid student ID.

FROM THE TWIN FALLS TIMES-NEWS

No education news stories posted online today.

FROM THE IDAHO STATE JOURNAL (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

State funding for schools is falling short

The head of the Idaho teachers' union says her group has not been consulted, at least not yet, on details of State School Superintendent Tom Luna's latest proposed budget that includes money for a pay-for-performance plan. That is not a hopeful sign, if Luna hopes to win legislative approval for the \$1.5 billion budget that he submitted to the governor's office this week.

Hark back to last spring. The Legislature voted at that time to dump a \$21 million version of Luna's pay-for-performance, in part because bonuses would have been based largely on how students perform on statewide tests. But the Idaho Education Association opposed the plan as well, and President Sherry Wood said the union had to be at the table when Luna and other education stakeholders hashed out details of a new bill this year.

"That actually has not happened," Wood said this week.

One hang-up has been the lack of a uniform statewide teacher evaluation plan, and a task force is scheduled to make a report on that in December.

Meantime, Luna's budget for 2009 and 2010 is about \$77 million more than the \$1.46 billion he requested last January to fund the current school year.

The new budget covers everything from teacher salaries and efforts to boost student test scores in reading, to classroom supplies and a program to let high school juniors and seniors earn college credits.

That sounds like a lot of money, but local districts remain pinched. District 25, which embraces Pocatello and Chubbuck, will need an extra \$300,000 for the current year, and taxpayers will foot that bill. It's not a lot, just \$10.50 in taxes per \$100,000 of property valuation, and it's just for one year, but it tells us that state funding falls short of meeting basic needs.

Part of the problem in District 25 is that enrollment is up by 255 students, which means 10 or 12 more teachers are needed. And fuel for school buses is around \$4 per gallon. Other districts are doing things like going to four-day weeks.

It's good that student numbers show an increase, if you can assume that the numbers reflect a growing local economy, and if it means the district will collect more from the state, based on

average daily attendance. But it's also evidence that lawmakers in Boise need to loosen the purse strings a bit, apart from pay-for-performance and other experiments.

Wood is already stating that the forthcoming teacher evaluation plan should stay separate from any pay-for-performance plan when the Legislature considers both proposals next year. Teacher evaluations, which now vary across the state, should be used to help teachers grow professionally, pinpointing their weaknesses and areas where they can improve, Wood says.

The grading system should not be used to determine whether teachers are "good" or "bad" and whether they should be paid accordingly, she says.

Pardon me? Doesn't that come under the category of performance?

Luna is right when he says "I don't pretend to think there is not going to be opposition" to his plan. And this is four months before the legislative session even begins.

CHARTER SCHOOL PLANS GARDEN ON ROOF

— By John O'Connell

POCATELLO — Eventually, staff members with the Pocatello Community Charter School hope their students' green thumbs will help supplement the school lunch program.

Additionally, the students could grow the native plants needed to complete a so-called green roof at the new school, where designs call for covering the roof with foliage to help with drainage and insulation.

Local developer Brent Nichols, in partnership with an area organic farming demonstration project called Lady Bird Farms, has agreed to donate a greenhouse for the charter school students to use.

The greenhouse will be built on school property. The goal is to have it operational by December.

Though the charter school has lofty goals for the greenhouse, in the short term the staff is simply excited to have a place where students can learn about growing vegetables.

"We will be able to learn from what's going on in the greenhouse," said Principal Martha Martin. "Our middle-schoolers study native plants each spring."

Martin said several parents of charter school children are experts in growing plants and have agreed to help with the effort.

The school applied for a grant to install the green roof but did not get it.

However, Martin said research done for the grant will be helpful in installing one with help from the student gardeners.

FROM THE IDAHO FALLS POST REGISTER (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Child care and classes

Emerson offers day care for teenage parents

By HEATHER WELLS hwells@postregister.com

Alyssa Romero never expected to be a teenage mom, but that's where the Emerson Alternative High School senior has found herself.

Luckily, the 18-year-old hasn't had to worry about finding someone to watch her 5-month-old daughter, Jeslynn, or driving the baby across town to Skyline High School's child-care center while trying to attend classes.

Emerson opened its own child-care center this fall for children ages 6 weeks to 3 years.

"I didn't plan on this -- you never think it will happen to you," Romero said.

For teen parents such as Romero, the school day is split into two shifts. One is dedicated to the center and the other to classes. For about three hours, the moms watch their children and the others at the center.

That's one of the main reasons Emerson Principal Wendy Cavan and others pushed to add the center. Without it, students would have to take their children to Skyline's day care, which costs extra gas and the chance to spend time with their offspring.

"We are very lucky and feel very fortunate," Cavan said.

Emerson's child-care center is equipped with cribs, rocking chairs, toys and other items and can house as many as 12 children. But it's not a typical day care.

It also acts as a class for the teen parents or others who want to learn about caring for children. Each student earns high school credit and is eligible to receive credit from Idaho State University.

The center also offers curriculum for teen fathers, although none is enrolled.

"There's a big need for it," said Collene Bristol, who worked at Skyline High School's care center for 12 years and is now running Emerson's facility. "A lot of people wouldn't finish school without it."

Tyshya Stuckman, 16, doesn't know what she'd do without the facility.

She brings her two boys Dazryn and Adacyn to the center.

"If they didn't do this, I wouldn't be able to come back to school," Stuckman said.

Romero knows the feeling.

When she discovered she was pregnant, she dropped out of Skyline and debated whether to keep her baby. She also considered getting her GED.

"I figured when I had her I wasn't going to give her up, and you can't really get anywhere without a high school diploma," Romero said.

Cops and courts reporter Heather Wells can be reached at 542-6765.

Did you know?

Emerson Alternative High School can enroll as many as 150 students and offers classes needed to receive a high school diploma. The difference between it and a traditional high school is that students take two classes at a time for six weeks instead of several classes over a few months.